



SEA ISLE CITY POLICE DEPARTMENT NEWS MEDIA INFORMATION REPORT

Location: SEA ISLE CITY

DATE: 07/09/2019 DAY: Tuesday Time: 3:00PM

BRIEF NARRATIVE OF INCIDENT

SEA ISLE CITY, NJ – The City of Sea Isle City and the Sea Isle City Volunteer Fire Department (SICVFD) have and will always make public safety a number one priority.

The SICVFD has a long history of providing top-level firefighting services to the residents and visitors of Sea Isle City. For decades and in some instances spanning generations, many SICVFD volunteers have dedicated time and energy that could be spent with loved ones or enjoying other aspects of life – strictly to benefit all the people of this community.

The evolution of firefighting has now become a much more regulated task and meeting the strict training requirements presents challenges to all Volunteer Fire Departments. The SICVFD is not alone in having to deal with the challenges of keeping up with today's required training certifications. The initial basic firefighting course is currently sixteen (16) weeks of training, so obviously there is a tremendous amount of dedication by the men and women who enter the firefighting service. There is no distinction or exemption for volunteer firefighters; they all must attend the same training classes as career firefighters.

After every critical incident in Sea Isle City, there is an after-action review of the combined responses of the PD, FD and EMS. The purpose of these reviews is to take an honest look at all the disciplines and how each organization performed during the course of that incident. The goal of these reviews is to look at what was done correctly and where there was room for improvement – and how those improvements can be implemented. The singular goal of these reviews is to make certain the City is doing everything possible to provide the highest level of service

and protection to its citizens.

During the review of the overall response to this year's fire on Easter morning, the City sought the assistance of the Cape May County Fire Marshal and the Cape May County Fire Coordinators, who are a resource for municipal fire departments. During this review, the topic of training and certifications arose, and soon after it was discovered that many of the SICVFD's volunteers did not have their certification(s) properly updated with the N.J. Division of Fire Safety, which is the certifying agency for all firefighters in New Jersey.

The City and the SICVFD took immediate actions to quickly obtain the existing training certificates from each firefighter in Sea Isle City.

Working in harmony with the N.J. Division of Fire Safety, the Cape May County Fire Marshal Cape May County Fire Coordinators, the Cape May County Fire Academy and Sea Isle City's local firefighters, the City was able to obtain the required documentation and submit all paperwork to the State for their approval.

There are many different certification levels that are required for firefighters, and each one involves different training courses to qualify for those certifications.

As of June 27, 2019, the City has thirty-three (33) firefighters who are certified through the NJDFS, with many of those volunteers possessing various additional certifications. Among those thirty-three (33) certified firefighter's, eight (8) are certified in "Incident Command" and can hold leadership positions within the SICVFD.

Earlier this year, some of those found not to have NJDFS certifications had previously held leadership positions within the SICVFD. In the interim, arrangements were made with two of Sea Isle City's neighboring mutual aid fire departments to ensure the City had proper supervision at fire scenes until the City's administration could obtain its own certified, independent leadership structure within the SICVFD.

At no time was there any threat to public safety while this certification process was taking place. Most SICVFD volunteers have many years of firefighting experience – whether they had the required certifications or not. There were temporary procedures put in place to ensure the City's firefighting efforts were following the required standards.

As work and life commitments continue to become a greater burden on most people, keeping up with the strict guidelines and training requirements placed on

SICVFD volunteers will remain a top priority.

It is also important to note that the recent fires that have occurred in Sea Isle City during the past nine (9) months had nothing to do with the SICVFD's certification process. Each of those fires were independently investigated and determined to be caused by non-criminal acts that were unrelated to the lack of updated paperwork being obtained by Sea Isle City's firefighters.

Mayor Desiderio and the City's administration are grateful for each of Sea Isle City's volunteer firefighters and their commitment to serving this community.

At all times, competent leadership has been in place at the SICVFD, and certified leadership is presently in place.

#

Officer Authorizing Release: Chief Thomas McQuillen X *TM 434*
Contact: (609) 263-4311 ext 2310

Reviewed/Approved By: Chief Thomas McQuillen X